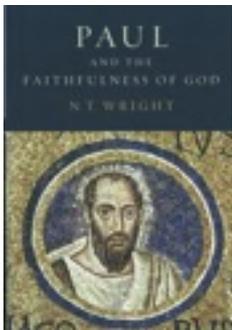


Conflict in unestablished churches is inevitable. Converts are coming from every corner of society. Different ages. Different backgrounds. Different cultures. Different social classes.

There are bound to be different views on about everything. Yet Christ's churches are to be one-minded. To become one family.

We have this example in vivid color in the Corinthian churches.

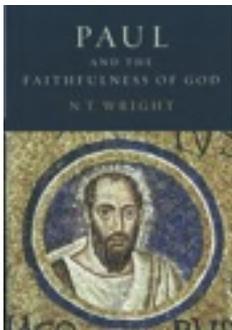


Paul's Early Epistles

In these 2 sections of 1 Corinthians, this week and next, we learn an enormous amount about what it takes to build this kind of one mindedness—

what it means to think through the principles embedded in the apostolic teaching

to deal with the unique cultural conflicts that plague churches of every generation and every culture.

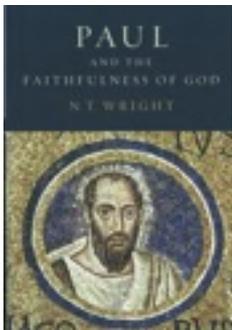


Paul's Early Epistles

Two weeks ago, we officially began our extensive series on the Corinthian correspondence.

This series is going to be very important in filling out our understanding of how Paul laid the foundation of the gospel for unity in his churches.

We will see its application to both unity in the Corinthian churches and unity in the network he was building, along with the tremendous cost he paid personally for laying that foundation.

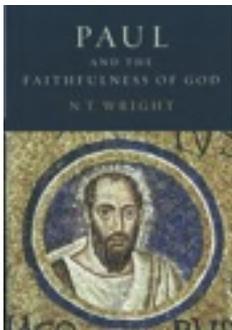


Paul's Early Epistles

Two weeks ago in Session 1, we attempted to discover Paul's intent in writing the Corinthian letters.

Last week, we turned our focus to 1 Corinthians 1–6 to see how Paul laid the foundation for dealing with their disunity by returning to the gospel.

This week and next week, we will look at the specific divisions that occurred in the Corinthian churches.



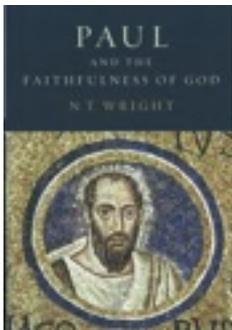
Paul's Early Epistles

There were 3 types of community-wide divisions:

1. Divisions in marriage, chapter 7
2. Divisions in social status/lifestyle, chapters 8–10
3. Divisions in men's and women's roles, chapter 11:1–16

There were 3 types of divisions in their community gatherings:

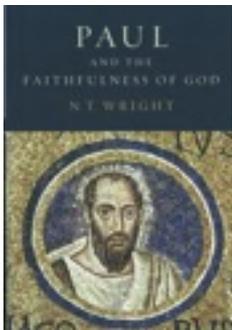
1. Divisions at the Lord's supper
2. Divisions in the order of gifts
3. Divisions in the meeting itself



Passage: 1 Corinthians 7:1–11:16

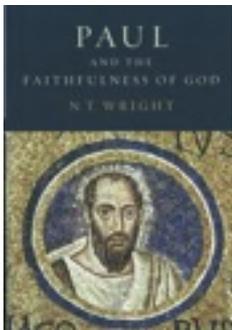
Questions:

1. Why did Paul begin to systematically address issue after issue beginning in chapter 7?
2. How did Paul deal with divisions in marriage?
3. How did Paul deal with divisions in social status or individual lifestyles?
4. How did Paul deal with divisions in men's and women's roles?



Book 4: The Corinthian Letters: Fragmentation of the Gospel

- Session 1: The Fragmentation of the Gospel
- Session 2: Building on One Foundation: The Traditions
- Session 3: Divisions in Their Community Life
- Session 4: Divisions in Their Community Gatherings
- Session 5: Back to the Gospel Foundations
- Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



Paul's Early Epistles

Book 5: The Corinthian Letters: Progressing the Gospel Through Multiplying Churches

Session 1: The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

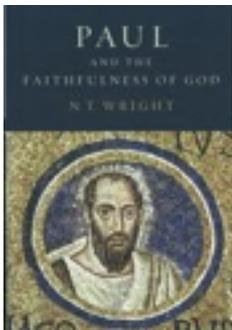
Session 2: The Ministry of the Gospel: Conflicts Without and Fears Within

Session 3: Sacrificing Network to Network for the Progress of the Gospel

Session 4: The Importance of Apostolic Teams

Session 5: The Appeal to the Corinthian Churches

Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



Paul's Early Epistles

The Early Letters

Book 1: The Early Letters: Fully Establishing the Churches in the Gospel

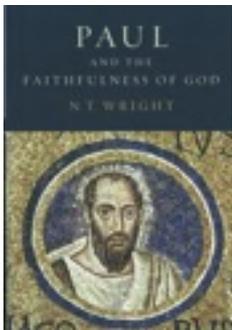
Book 2: Galatians: So Quickly Leaving the Gospel

Book 3: The Thessalonian Correspondence: Conversion to the Gospel

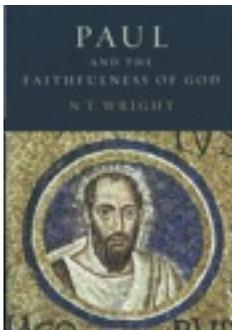
Book 4: The Corinthian Letters: Fragmentation of the Gospel

Book 5: The Corinthian Letters: Progressing the Gospel Through Multiplying Churches

Book 6: Romans: Complete Treatise of Paul's Gospel

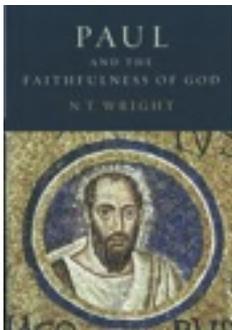


Quite a bit of background is needed to grasp the answers to the questions and basic problems Paul was having with the Corinthian churches and to begin reconstructing Paul's intent in writing to them.



All of this background is found in the letters and the book of Acts.

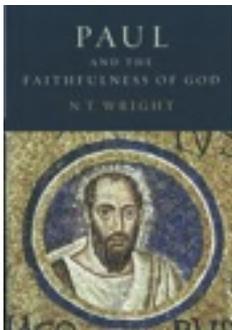
In addition, we will rely on a wealth of early Graeco–Roman research, as gathered by a set of scholars over the last 40 years, as we attempt to grasp the intention of these letters.



The key work and author carrying the conversation is

The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth by Gerd Theissen, (Fortress, 1982)

Like Malherbe's *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophical Tradition of Pastoral Care*, usually one author brings it down to the churches.

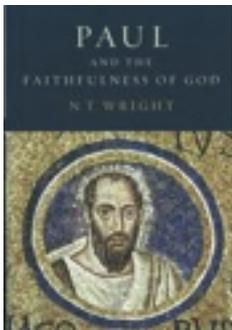


Paul's Early Epistles

Another book I mentioned contributes to getting on top of the conversation:

Beginning From Jerusalem: Volume 2 of Christianity in the Making by James D. G. Dunn (Eerdman, 2009)

This contains a summary of almost all the current research on the “quest for the historical church.” See these sections on the Corinthian churches: “The Founding of the Church at Corinth” pages 692–702 and the 4 Corinthian letters, pages 780–857.



I am using Dunn heavily in this section.

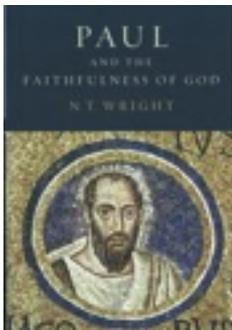
Paul's Early Epistles

In our background message and session 1 of this booklet, we worked on building a set of intention statements to guide us as we deal with each major section in the Corinthian correspondence

One covers Paul's intention in writing all 4 letters

One for 1 Corinthians

One for 2 Corinthians

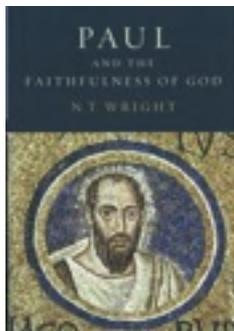


Intention Statement for the Corinthian Letters

To defend his unique role of proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles in the context of all sorts of rivals, keeping the Corinthian churches in his sphere of authority, as he continued to build a network of churches committed to progressing the gospel among the Gentiles

by writing his second letter to deal with internal divisions, rooted in differing social statuses fragmenting the Corinthian churches.

by writing his fourth letter to appeal to the Corinthians to remain under his leadership, despite attacks from rival leaders on his apostleship.



Paul's Early Epistles

Intention Statement of 1 Corinthians

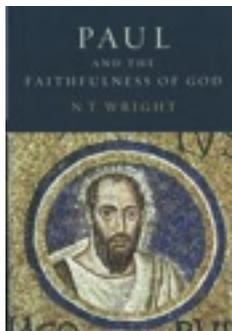
To deal with internal divisions, rooted in differing social statuses fragmenting the Corinthian churches, with the view of the Corinthian churches fully participating with him in the progress of the gospel

by applying the gospel to the core divisions that developed by factions within the churches

by specifically addressing factions in both

- community life and
- community gatherings

by appealing to the future resurrection



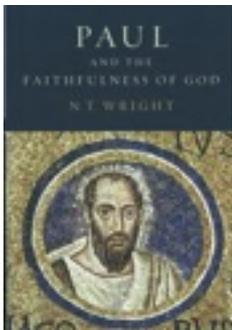
Intention Statement of 2 Corinthians

To defend his apostleship in the Corinthian churches so that they might remain in his sphere of authority and therefore participate fully in the progress amongst the Gentiles, for which he was uniquely commissioned by describing his internal stress in carrying out his stewardship

by describing the heart of the ministry of the gospel as “conflicts without and fears within,” as a context for victorious progress

by defending his apostleship and seeking the Corinthians as partners in that progress

Paul's Early Epistles



Intention Statement of 1 Corinthians

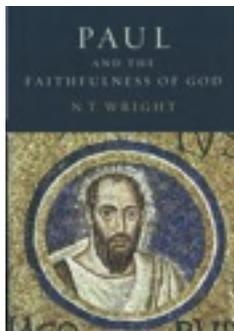
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- their community life and
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by appealing to the future resurrection

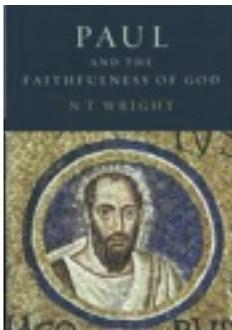


There were 3 types of community-wide divisions:

1. Divisions in marriage, chapter 7
2. Divisions in lifestyle, chapters 8–10
3. Divisions in men's and women's roles, chapter 11:1–16

We need to understand why Paul shifted to just addressing issue after issue.

Remember the occasion of this letter was Chloe's household.



¹⁰ Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. ¹¹ For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters.

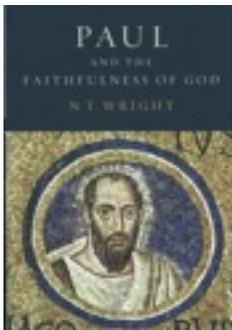
1 Corinthians 1:10–11

In the sections that follow Paul uses a similar phrase several times: "Now concerning..."

1 Corinthians 7:1

1 Corinthians 8:1

1 Corinthians 12:1

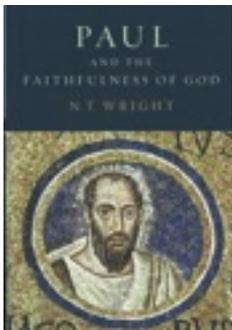


Paul's Early Epistles

Also, remember, Paul is building on a bed of teaching he has already delivered to them, which he calls the traditions.

We saw it in the first section, 1:1–6:20.

And we see it again here. He is applying that teaching as he addresses specific divisions in the Corinthian churches.



Paul's Early Epistles

¹⁶ I appeal to you, then, be imitators of me. ¹⁷ For this reason I sent you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ Jesus, as I teach them everywhere in every church. ¹⁸ But some of you, thinking that I am not coming to you, have become arrogant.

1 Corinthians 4:16–18

¹⁷ However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you. This is my rule in all the churches.

1 Corinthians 7:17

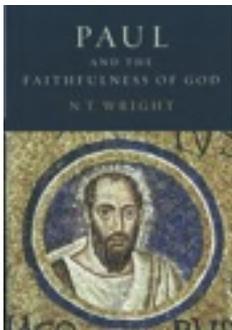
¹ Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. ² I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I handed them on to you.

1 Corinthians 11:1–2

He laid down a body of teaching in all the churches. He refers to it as “the teaching, the faith, the deposit, the sound doctrine, the rule of faith, the traditions,” which the Early Church called the teaching of Christ—the didache.

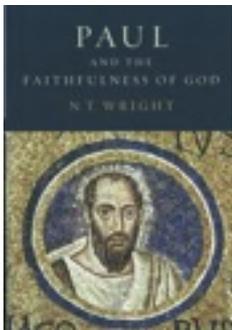
The Corinthians are to imitate him and follow the teaching he delivered to the churches—the way of Christ and His Apostles.

Paul assumes this teaching as the base for giving the answers he does to specific situations.



He unpacked the teaching, dealing with their divisions with the teaching he delivered to them (the didache), which was delivered to him by Christ (“to remind you of my ways in Christ Jesus, as I teach them everywhere in every church,” 1 Cor. 4:17).

He continues to do that in each of the issues he comments on: he assumes a bed of teaching he has already laid.



Paul's Early Epistles

He gives us clues to what he is doing in 1 Corinthians 7:

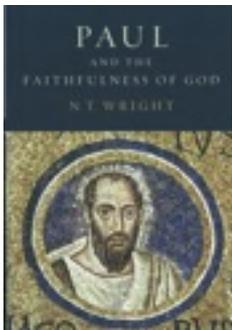
v. 6 This I say by way of concession, not of command.

v. 10 To the married I give this command—not I but the Lord

v. 12 To the rest I say—I and not the Lord

vv. 25–26 Now concerning virgins, I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord’s mercy is trustworthy. ²⁶ I think that, in view of the impending crisis....

v. 40 But in my judgment she is more blessed if she remains as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God.



Paul's Early Epistles

Also note these 2 references in this large section.

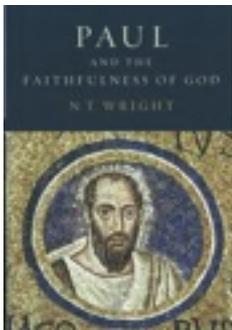
¹⁷ However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you. This is my rule in all the churches

1 Corinthians 7:17

¹ Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. ² I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I handed them on to you.... ¹⁶ But if anyone is disposed to be contentious—we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God

1 Corinthians 11:1–2,16

Paul's Early Epistles



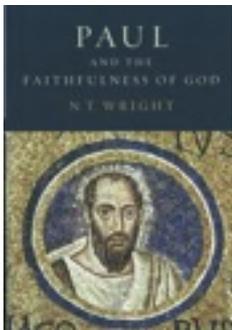
What exactly is going on here?

Paul assumes 2 things:

1. There is a set of teaching that he received from Christ which all the churches are to follow.
2. There is a set of principles, implicit in that teaching, that guides them in handling the difficult choices in their culture, in a way that produces unity and an effective witness.

His guidance to them is in applying those principles to their cultural situation.

Paul's Early Epistles

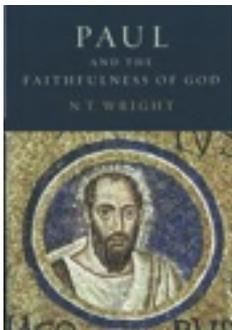


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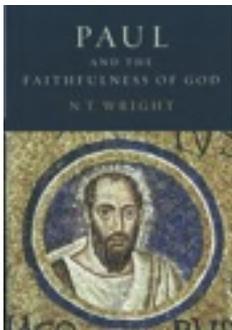


Paul's Early Epistles

Divisions in marriage, 7:1–40

Paul's basic argument:

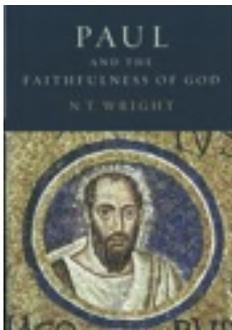
- The general teaching is that everyone should remain in the state they were in when they became a Christian—principles of household order/authority (“household texts”: Ephesians 5:22–6:9, Colossians 3:18–4:1)
- When conflicts arise, that order must be maintained; that is an underlying set of assumptions/teaching (7:35: “maintain good order”).
- Yet there is a range of options to choose from in many of the situations.



Divisions in marriage, 7:1–40

Paul addresses 3 groups:

1. Those who are married
2. Those who are single or engaged
3. Widows

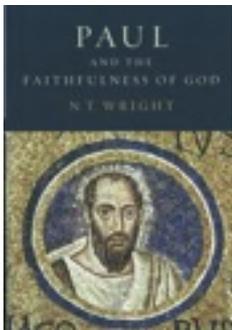


Divisions in marriage

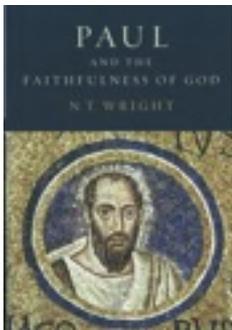
Dunn helps us understand the basic issue.

What did the new loyalty to Christ mean for marriage, for the unmarried, for those married to unbelievers? In other words, how did their new loyalty to Christ affect the most basic unit of society, the marital household?

Dunn, James D. G. (2008-10-29). *Beginning from Jerusalem (Christianity in the Making, vol. 2)* (Kindle Locations 13266-13267). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.



²⁴⁸ “It is noticeable that Paul’s treatment follows the sequence of the ‘household rules,’ which were common in the ancient world and which became a feature of subsequent NT letters (Col. 3.18– 4.1; Eph. 5.22– 6.9; etc.) — husbands and wives (7.1–16), children (7.14) and slaves (7.21–24); also that the moderating ideals were those more widely cherished for their social value—enkrateia, ‘self-control’ (7.5, 9), and euschēmōn, ‘good order’ (7.35). See, e.g., D. Balch, ‘Household Codes’, ABD 3.318-20; also ‘1 Cor. 7.32–35 and ‘Stoic Debates about Marriage, Anxiety and Distraction’, JBL 102 (1983) 429–39; and further below, § 34 n. 394.”

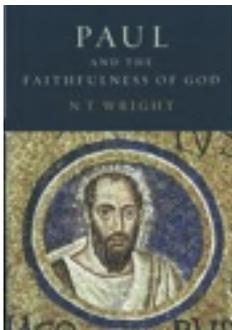


Dunn, James D. G. (2008-10-29). *Beginning from Jerusalem (Christianity in the Making, vol. 2)* (Kindle Locations 31253-31258). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition, footnote 248.

Paul's Early Epistles

Those who are married:

- Because of the vast cultural immorality, fulfill sexual needs of each other, except for a time devoted to prayer.
- If married to a believer and he or she leaves, remain unmarried with the potential of reconciling.
- If married to an unbeliever, stay married for the sake of the children, but if he or she leaves, you are free.



Those who are single or engaged

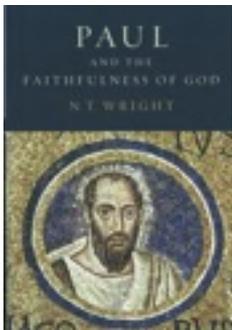
- Because of the impending distress, if you are single stay that way, in my opinion, you will better be able to serve the Lord.
- The same if you are engaged, but if you cannot handle it, go ahead and get married.

Widows

- Young widows are free to marry, but in light of the impending stress, it is ideal not to.

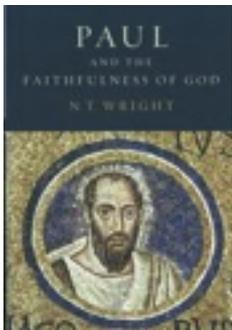
Slave

- Remain contented in your situation, but if you have the opportunity to gain your freedom, it is better.



Several things should be noted here.

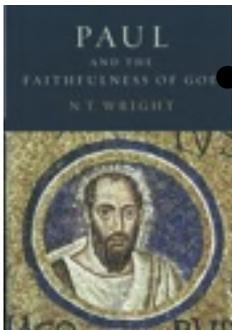
1. His advice is based upon an impending distress (a series of famines across the decade) and a belief that the return of Christ may be near.
2. The general principle: Serving God out of the life situation you are in is the best position, and as God gives opportunity, reconcile or legitimately change your situation.
3. We have an excellent picture here of Paul “doing theology in culture.”



Divisions in social status or lifestyle, 8:1–10:33

Paul's basic argument:

- No believer should participate in ceremonies and meals where idols are being worshipped.
- The strong (those who are of the social status of being involved in private associations or able to entertain socially in their homes) are free to eat meat though it has been most likely sacrificed to idols.
- If the weak (lower status) are put in a situation of participating with you and cannot handle it, then abstain in that situation.
- The principle of freedom in Christ is to allow us to fit conformably in any situation for the sake of the gospel.
- In certain cultural situations, we may give up that right ourselves, but not legislate it on others.

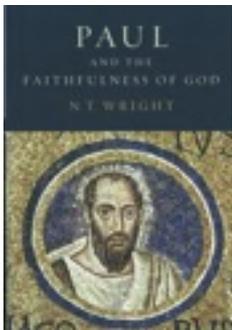


Paul's Early Epistles

Dunn helps us understand the cultural situation:

“But what is rather in view is probably social custom and the rights of some (Roman citizens in particular) to participate in civic banquets and other such celebrations.... The question came down to whether the other members, particularly those of higher social status who could anticipate being regularly invited and expected to join in such banquets, should feel free to exercise their right to do so.”

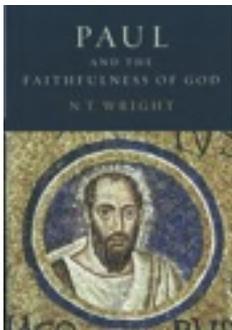
Dunn, James D. G. (2008-10-29). Beginning from Jerusalem (Christianity in the Making, vol. 2) (Kindle Locations 13328-13330). (Kindle Locations 13320-13321). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.



Paul's Early Epistles

Dunn helps us understand the cultural situation

“It should be noted at once that he does not deny these rights, either his as an apostle or theirs as citizens of Corinth; his concern was rather how believers should deal with the clash between their rights and their responsibilities to fellow believers. The fact that Paul concludes by extending his discussion of rights even to private guest-dining (10.23-30), thus to the whole range of friendship and association beyond the circle of the congregation, shows how alive he was to the problem of overlapping networks and how concerned he was to indicate a way in which these overlaps could be sustained without damaging the church.”



Dunn, James D. G. (2008-10-29). Beginning from Jerusalem (Christianity in the Making, vol. 2) (Kindle Locations 13332–13336). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

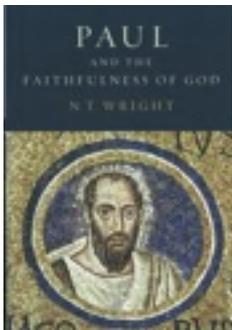
Paul's Early Epistles

The motif of weak and strong actually begins in the first chapter of 1 Corinthians.

²⁶ Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.

²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no one might boast in the presence of God.

1 Corinthians 1:26–29



Paul's Early Epistles

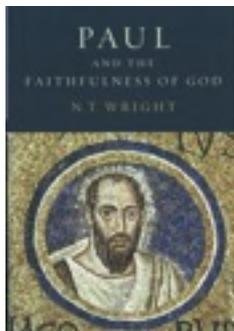
This passage sets the context for understanding the whole “strong–weak” issue of 1 Corinthians 8–10:

The strong are the educated, wealthy, and of high social position, with significant rights in society.

The weak are the poor, the down trodden, the non-citizens and slaves—not with rights in society.

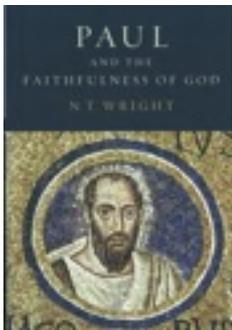
This explains why Paul inserts chapter 9 between chapters 8 and 10.

Chapter 9 is about Paul giving up his rights for financial support as a minister of the gospel.



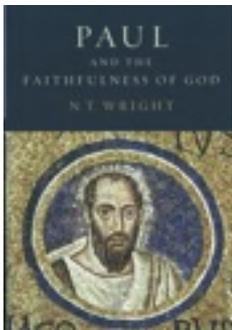
Paul's argument on his rights in chapter 9:

- He had the right to be supported as a minister of the gospel as Peter and others were, even to take along a wife.
- But he gave up that right because of the intense conflict around his controversy in taking the gospel to the Gentiles.
- He was not arguing that every minister of the gospel should do that.
- In fact, toward the end of the chapter, he argues that the principle of freedom he embraced allowed him flexibly to adapt to all social contexts comfortably.



So Paul is primarily addressing the strong (who also probably make up most of the leadership):

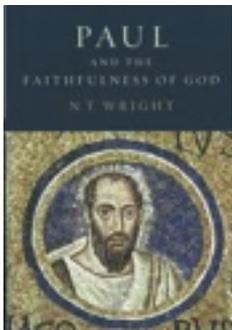
- They are free to exercise their rights in the culture, to fit into all sorts of social situations for the progress of the gospel.
- But they must be very sensitive to the weak, and not put them in bad situations that they cannot handle.
- And, as we will see in 1 Corinthians 11:17ff, when they are in the assembly meetings, they must not separate themselves with separate meals but assume social equality with the weak.



Divisions in men's and women's roles, 11:1–16

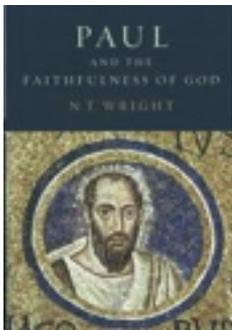
In this situation, the issue crosses over between community life and community gatherings and relates to the social practice of women covering their heads in a patriarchal society.

Note, again, Paul is working out a principled solution (theology in culture) based on the teaching (tradition) passed on from Christ for all the churches.



¹ Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. ² I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I handed them on to you. ³ But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1–3

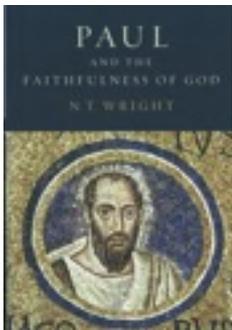


Paul's Early Epistles

Again notice how consistent Paul is.

- He ask them to be imitators of him (an he represents “the way of Christ and his apostles”)
- Maintain the “traditions just as I handed them on to you”
- The he states the core teaching: God’s created order:
Christ is the head of man.
Man is the head of his wife.
God is the head of Christ.

What follows then is Paul doing theology in culture:



The issue is whether women, who are now free in Christ, should wear head coverings like is done in the patriarchal culture they live in. *Paul's Early Epistles*

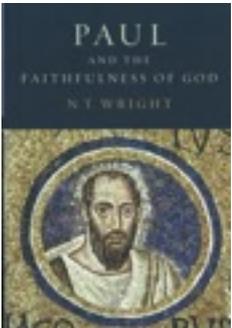
Paul's argument:

- A woman who prays or prophesies in the church meeting with her head uncovered disgraces her head.
- This serves as a symbol of authority on her head.

What does that mean?

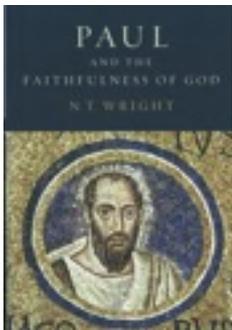
Why is that the case?

Again, Dunn is very helpful for us

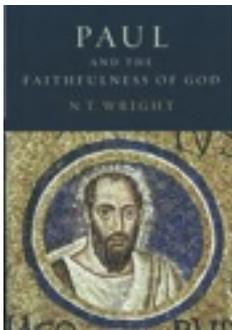


“The tension exposed in 11.2–16 (and probably 14.33b–36) is one occasioned by the fact that the believers met in homes, the tension caused by the same space serving as both home and meeting place of church.... Paul’s response, however, indicates that it was two (other) aspects which most troubled him. One was the implications of the women’s conduct for male hierarchy.”

Dunn, James D. G. (2008-10-29). *Beginning from Jerusalem (Christianity in the Making, vol. 2)* (Kindle Locations 13458–13459). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition. (Kindle Locations 13442–13444)



“That Paul was highly mindful of the impression which his churches might make on the wider public is indicated by his second consideration in 11.2–16... ³¹³ The sexual connotations should not be missed: ‘for a married woman in Roman society to appear in public without a hood sent out signals of sexual availability or at very least a lack of concern for respectability’ (Thiselton, 1 Corinthians 5, citing A. Rouselle, ‘Body Politics in Ancient Rome’, in G. Duby and M. Perot, eds., *A History of Women in the West I: From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints* [Cambridge: Harvard University, 1992] 296-337.”



Dunn, James D. G. (2008-10-29). *Beginning from Jerusalem* (Christianity in the Making, vol. 2) (Kindle Locations 31438–31441). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition. (Kindle Locations 13477–13478).

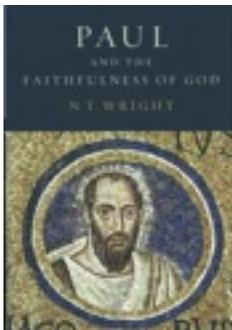
Paul's Early Epistles

Again, we see Paul doing theology in culture.

He first gives the teaching, from which an embedded principle leads to the ability to do theology in culture.

In cultures today that are traditional societies, where women wear veils, the same practice should be followed.

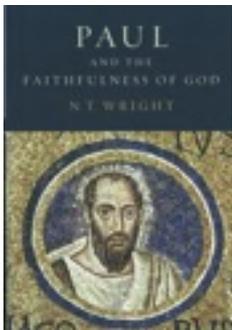
Where that is not the case, the teaching of men leading in the assembly should still be followed.



So the situation was this:

In the home, a woman did not need a covering on her head, but when out in public worship, and probably any time, she would wear it.

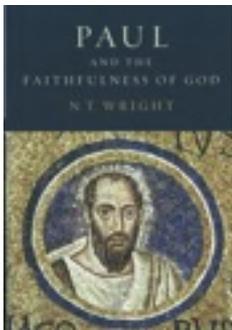
Some evidently thought that when they were in the church meeting, they were free and took off their veils. Most likely they would not have gone out in society without a veil at that time in their culture.



Issue: Solving community conflicts at a principle level

Questions:

1. In what way does Paul's example of using principles embedded in the teaching guide us in addressing issues in our churches today?
2. What does this demand of leaders, to be able to address church conflicts with the skill of Paul?
3. What will happen if we try to solve these conflicts by man-made rules rather than principles growing out of the teaching?
4. In what sense are we doing theology in culture when we help believers think through applying the teaching to their own situations at a church level?



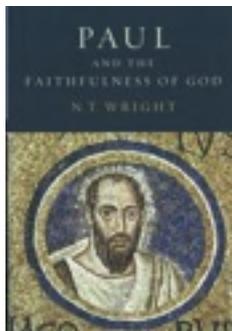
Paul's Early Epistles

Tremendous insight:

Unity related to leaders being able to handle inevitable community conflicts across various social strata in the churches.

First, know the teaching (apostolic traditions)

Be able to think on that foundation—in principles—doing theology in culture.



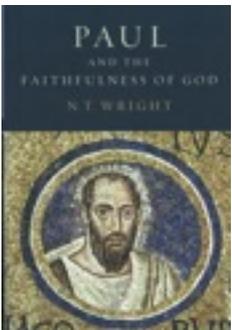
Paul's Early Epistles

Examples

Marriage:

Based on the household texts (proper order in the churches),

help believers think through the complicated conflicts facing them, surrounding the issue of marriage.

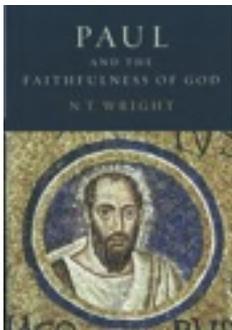


Examples

Strong and weak:

Based on the principle of our freedom in Christ,

help those better off in society to use that freedom in a way that furthers the gospel, as they engage in culture, while being sensitive to the weaker in society and dissolving all differences in the context of the community life of the churches.

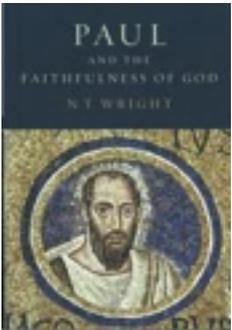


Paul's Early Epistles

Examples

Men and women:

Based on the principle of order in creation,
help believers think through the expression
of that order in the cultural context in which
they find themselves.



Paul's Early Epistles

Examples

India—caste system

Iran—present distress

USA—men and women

